

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A circuit board comprising a mechanism for provably disabling the circuit board, the mechanism comprising:

5 signal means for conducting a signal between the mechanism and the circuit board; and

separation means for facilitating detachment of the mechanism from the circuit board;

10 wherein the circuit board becomes at least partly non-functional if the mechanism is detached from the circuit board.

2. The circuit board of claim 1, wherein said signal means comprises a wire trace.

15 3. The circuit board of claim 1, wherein said separation means comprises one or more gaps between the mechanism and the circuit board.

4. The circuit board of claim 1, wherein the mechanism further comprises:

20 identification means for identifying the mechanism.

5. The circuit board of claim 4, wherein said identification means comprises an identification circuit.

25 6. The circuit board of claim 4, wherein said identification means comprises a visible identification code.

7. The circuit board of claim 4, wherein said identification means is protected from being easily manipulated.

8. In an electronic assembly, a mechanism for at least partially
5 disabling the electronic assembly, the mechanism comprising:
a segment of the electronic assembly configured to be detachable from the electronic assembly;
one or more signal conductors configured to carry one or more signals between the mechanism and the electronic assembly; and
10 an identification;
wherein said signal conductor is broken when said segment is detached from the electronic assembly.

9. The mechanism of claim 8, wherein said identification comprises
15 an electronic identification module having a programmed identification code.

10. The mechanism of claim 9, wherein said identification code is readable only after said one or more signal conductors are severed.

20 11. The mechanism of claim 8, wherein said identification is protected from being manipulated.

12. The mechanism of claim 8, wherein said identification is encapsulated to prevent easy removal of said identification.

25

13. The mechanism of claim 8, wherein the mechanism is bordered by one or more gaps separating the mechanism from the electronic assembly.

14. The mechanism of claim 8, wherein the electronic assembly is a circuit board, and said segment comprises a segment of the circuit board bordering an edge of the circuit board.

5

15. The mechanism of claim 14, wherein the edge of the circuit board is an external edge of the circuit board.

16. The mechanism of claim 14, wherein the edge of the circuit board
10 is an internal edge defined by a bore through the circuit board.

17. A mechanism for disabling an electronic assembly, comprising:
a portion of the electronic assembly detachable from the assembly; and
within said portion, a signal conduit configured to carry a signal;
15 wherein the electronic assembly is operable while said portion is attached
to the assembly; and

wherein one or more functions of the electronic assembly become
inoperable when said portion is detached from the assembly.

20 18. The mechanism of claim 17, further comprising an identification
module.

19. The mechanism of claim 18, wherein said identification module is
configured to prevent manipulation of said identification module.

25

20. The mechanism of claim 18, wherein said identification module
comprises a programmed identification code.

21. The mechanism of claim 18, wherein said identification module comprises a barcode.

5 22. The mechanism of claim 18, wherein said identification module comprises a hologram.

23. The mechanism of claim 18, wherein said identification module comprises a serial number.

10

24. The mechanism of claim 17, wherein said portion and the assembly are coplanar.

25. The mechanism of claim 17, wherein the mechanism further
15 comprises one or more gaps between said portion and the assembly.

20

26. The mechanism of claim 17, wherein a plane of said portion is aligned at an angle to a plane of the assembly during normal operation of the electronic assembly.

27. A method of ensuring the disablement of an electronic assembly, comprising:

receiving an electronic assembly for disablement, the electronic assembly comprising a detachable key, said key comprising:

25 a signal conductor configured to convey a signal between said key and the electronic assembly;
detaching said key from the electronic assembly; and

proffering evidence that said key has been detached.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein said proffering comprises proffering said key.

5

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said key further comprises: an identification code.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said proffering comprises proffering said identification code.

10

31. The method of claim 29, wherein said identification code is one of: a barcode, a serial number and a hologram.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein said identification code is a code programmed into an electronic identification module.

15

33. The method of claim 27, wherein said detaching comprises: severing said signal conductor.

20